



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Queensland: Regional Racing**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 20 March 2003**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 20 March 2003  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Entsch, Warren, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr ENTSCHE** (Leichhardt—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources) (9.49 am)—Last weekend the Queensland Minister for Tourism and Racing, by accepting a decision from her quango, the Queensland Racing Board, ripped the guts out of country racing. After a decision that was handed down, country races in Georgetown, Cooktown and Laura are no more. Cooktown has 108 years of racing history and Laura has 106 years. That is now finished; this year will be the last. Cairns has dropped from 36 race meetings to 12 and from 216 races over those 12 meetings to 63. Why are they doing it? They are doing it so that they can make sure they can maximise their profits through Sky television and UNiTAB—to hell with the state and to hell with the social and cultural benefits in those communities. They want to maximise their profits in Brisbane, bolster them in the south-east corner and destroy the small communities. It is an absolute disgrace that Minister Merri Rose has allowed this to perpetuate. What is even more unfortunate is that there are four Labor members of parliament in my electorate, and not one of them has opened their mouth and raised the issue of the impact of this. About \$10 million is going to be lost in our northern communities through the destruction of these races, while they are going to build another footbridge in Brisbane. It is absolutely disgraceful.

What do they need for Laura, Georgetown and Cooktown to continue to operate their once-a-year races? About \$100,000 a year. That is all they need. But, no, they rip the guts out of them, take it all to Brisbane and say, 'If you want to watch it, watch it on TV and bet through our local TAB.' I am calling on the minister to get a bit of guts, to get out there and have a go and to give these communities back what they deserve. The social and cultural aspects have to be taken into consideration rather than just the economic situation in South-East Queensland. If the minister is not prepared to stand up and do it now, I remind her that there is an election in Queensland very shortly. If she thinks she can dig a hole and bury this, she has another think coming. I can tell you now that people in Far North Queensland have had a gutful of this sort of incompetence. They have had a gutful of the lack of representation from their local state Labor members who are not prepared to stand up and challenge this. Mark my words, it will definitely be on the election agenda come the next state election. (*Time expired*)